

**Name of the Library:**

**Salt Lake City Public Library**

**Address of Central Library:**

Main Library  
210 East 400 South  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
(801) 524-8200



**Management:** Nancy Tessman has served as the director of the Salt Lake City Public Library System since 1996. She served as deputy director of the City Library from 1990-1996 and worked in many other positions since joining the system in 1976, including extension services director, branch manager, director of human resources and community relations director. Ms. Tessman served as chair of the Utah Library Association's Legislative Committee from 1989-1994 and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Public Library Association and on the Board of the Metropolitan Library Section of PLA. Ms. Tessman also chaired the Intellectual Freedom and Strategic Planning Committees for the Utah Library Association (ULA). She received the 1996 ULA Distinguished Service Award for her contributions and dedication to libraries and in 2003, was named "Librarian of the Year" by the ULA.

**Number of Branch Libraries** Central Library and 5 Branch Libraries

**Facilities:** On November 3, 1998, voters overwhelmingly approved an \$84 million library bond. The bond covered the cost of a new 200,000 square-foot main library; parking for 600 vehicles; demolition of all of the buildings on the library block with the exception of the current library; an outdoor plaza; and replacement of the heating and cooling plant.

The Library Board of Directors voted unanimously to build a new building after a thorough space needs study conducted in 1997 revealed that the Main Library was deficient in numerous ways. It was determined that the most cost-effective solution was to build a new main library. Sixty-eight percent of Salt Lake City voters agreed when they cast their ballots in favor of the bond. In early 1999, the Board of Directors selected the architectural firm of Moshe Safdie and Associates in conjunction with local architects VCBO Architecture to design the new main library. The staff was heavily involved during the planning and design phase of the project. The ground-breaking ceremony was held on October 21, 2000. The new library opened to the public on February 8, 2003.

The new building embodies the idea that a library is more than a repository of books and computers - it reflects and engages the city's imagination and aspirations. The east side of the block was preserved as a peaceful urban green space.

In addition to the new Main Library, the bond provided funding for the expansion of the Anderson-Foothill Branch Library and the Sprague Branch Library.



The Sprague Branch Library expansion was designed to be below grade level in order to preserve the building's architecture. The completed project included a community meeting room, renovated space on the lower level for the children's area, and expanded collection space on the main floor. Remodeling of the east entrance along with the addition of plaza space and landscaping integrated the branch into the Sugar House Commons. The Grand Reopening of the branch took place on April 21, 2001.



The Anderson-Foothill Branch Library expansion and remodeling added 5,700 square-feet to the building provided an expanded children's area and a community meeting room. The completed construction was celebrated at a ceremony on March 8, 2003.



**Architecture:** The new Main Library in Salt Lake City embodies the idea that a library is more than a repository of books and computers - it reflects and engages the city's imagination and aspirations. The building is double the previous space with 240,000 square feet for more than 500,000 books and other materials, and room to grow the collection. The six-story curving, walkable wall embraces the public plaza, with

shops and services at ground level, reading galleries above, and a 300-seat auditorium. A multi-level reading area along the glass lens at the southern facade of the building looks out onto the plaza with stunning views of the city and Wasatch Mountains beyond. A roof-top garden, accessible by walking the crescent wall or the elevators, offers a 360 degree view of the Salt Lake Valley. Spiraling fireplaces on four floors resemble a column of flame from the vantage of 200 East and 400 South. The Urban Room between the library and the crescent wall is a space for all seasons, generously endowed with daylight and open to magnificent views.

The architects sought to link the library and City Hall as companion buildings in support of civic engagement. A granite water wall provides a cooling atmosphere and flows into a wedge-shaped garden. A reflecting pool under the base of the glass lens offers a respite from the warmth of Utah's summer sun. The public plaza was designed to create opportunities for community festivals, events, and celebrations. Funding has been provided through some of the Olympic revenues to complete the east side of the block as a peaceful urban green space.

**Technology:** Library materials now include not only books, but audiocassettes, compact discs, videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, in addition to visual materials such as art prints and slides. Three small rooms in the audiovisual area allow patrons to preview these materials before checking them out. The technology center and training lab offer 42 computer stations with Internet access; an additional 121 Internet computers are located throughout the building. The computers in the technology center have been partially provided through a Gates grant, and staff is available to assist users as they write papers, work on resumes, and develop computer skills.



**Programming:** "The Salt Lake City library is a secular city center where groups of all ethnicities, religions, politics and purposes feel they have a place and a stake. The library hosts classes in English as a second language, meditation and Braille, as well as discussion groups about the latest nonfiction. Organizations from Weight Watchers to the Royal Court of the Golden Spike Empire to

No More Homeless Pets have held meetings in the building, as well as Amnesty International, Single Moms, the Hispanic Dance Alliance and the Utah Socialists. On Saturdays, a group meets to read to their dogs."

The Children's Library at the Main Library is a light-filled, five-story atrium which may be observed from all of the floors above. Moveable, translucent "clouds" may be pulled across the space to provide shade when necessary. Along the outer edge you will find space for coats, backpacks, and strollers; a small room in which parents may attend to the needs of their babies; and an alcove filled with multimedia equipment loaded with educational games and learning programs. A large craft and story room houses many of the children's programs. Two special spaces are tucked under the reflecting pool of the plaza. Designed to free a child's imagination, these rooms are places for dreaming, playing, reading, and inventing. Grandmother's Attic recreates the coziness of an attic with wood beams and a trunk of dress-up clothes.. During the summer months, children can enjoy the adjacent terrace where gently flowing waterfalls cascade down the walls - a feature designed to cool the area and provide a calming but visually interesting background. The area also offers a space for outdoor story times during the warmer Utah months.

**Collections:** Library patrons expressed the desire for even more from the Main Library collections - a request that challenged the library to provide more depth and enlarge both the scope and breadth of the collections. For the past three years, collection development librarians have selected and acquired more than 80,000 new items. This brings the collection size for the new Main Library close to 500,000 items and the total library system collection to 750,000.

**Governance:** The Salt Lake City Public Library System is governed by a nine-member volunteer Board of Directors, all of whom must be residents of Salt Lake City. The

mayor recommends potential board members to the city council for their consideration. Board members are appointed for a term of three years. At the end of the first term, the city council may reappoint the member to a second term. An individual may serve no more than two consecutive three-year terms. At the end of two consecutive terms, the member must go off the library board for at least one year before serving again.

**Fundraising:** The City Library's Friends organization has received honors from the national association, Friends of Libraries, U.S.A.

**Staff:** Growth of the Salt Lake City Public Library System has seen an increase in staff from seven in 1905 to more than 250 in 2004. Also by 2004, the volunteer program, initiated to supplement services provided by library staff, grew to 200.